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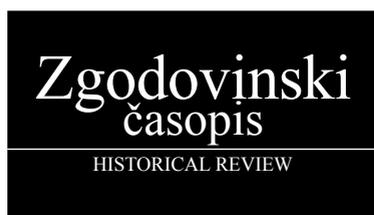
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Razprave

Robin Okey

British historians and the Habsburg Monarchy (1500–1918). A Survey of the Historiography from ca. 1850

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British Historians and the Habsburg Monarchy (1500–1918). A Survey of the Historiography from ca. 1850

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The scanty early British historiography of the Habsburg Monarchy reflected Britain's liberal self-image and imperial interests. Developing academic study between the wars addressed the Monarchy international role and nationality questions. Since 1945 it has diversified to include significant work on the early modern period, formerly neglected, and attention to cultural history. The original impulse is still to be seen, however, in interest in themes of break-up and the Monarchy seen as a whole. Recent work on the nature of empire, if not primarily directed at the Monarchy, may merit attention in current reassessments of its fortunes,

Key words/terms: Historiography; Habsburg Monarchy, nationality, R. W. Seton-Watson, A. J. P. Taylor, Robert J. W. Evans

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Britanski zgodovinarji in Habsburška monarhija (1500–1918). Pregled zgodovinopisja od približno 1850

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Skopo zgodnje britansko zgodovinopisje o Habsburški monarhiji je odražalo britansko liberalno samopodobo in imperialne interese. Razvijajoče se akademske študije med vojnima so obravnavale mednarodno vlogo monarhije in narodnostna vprašanja. Po letu 1945 se priključijo tudi pomembna dela, ki obravnavajo zgodnji novi vek, ki je bil pred tem zanemarjen, in posvečajo pozornost kulturni zgodovini. Največ pozornosti se je še vedno posvečalo razpadu monarhije in monarhiji kot celoti. Novejša dela, ki obravnavajo značaj cesarstva, četudi niso v prvi vrsti usmerjena v monarhijo, si zaslužijo pozornost, saj lahko omogočijo novo presojo njene usode.

Ključne besede: zgodovinopisje, Habsburška monarhija, narodnost, R. W. Seton-Watson, A. J. P. Taylor, Robert J. W. Evans

To cover a century and a half of British work on four hundred years of Habsburg history is no easy matter. The Habsburg Monarchy was a composite state, whose story must take into account not only the fortunes of the dynasty and the central authorities but the national histories of the component countries with which they interacted. The long period since 1850 has involved great changes in the development of history as a discipline, both in institutional structures and thematic concerns. Suffice it to say that the task set by my title is fascinating, but difficult. A possible thread which offers itself through these complexities is to consider how far a native historical discourse helped shape the way in which British historians perceived the Monarchy, guiding their choice of subject matter and theme. True, this requires some sensitivity to one's own historiography not always present in these days of specialization, besides risking essentialising a discourse. Over time, shifts in circumstance and new influences will attenuate initial assumptions, not to speak of the power of history's professionalisation to impose its own priorities. But positing some elements of a discourse at least provides a starting point for discussion. This raises some questions of method. It suggests a roughly chronological approach, as one best suited to bring out the shape of the evolving historiography and draw attention to patterns of continuity and change. What is to count as British historiography is not always clear-cut where migration is involved. The principle broadly followed below is to include historians of British upbringing or whose mature work was written in Britain and related to other British historians' concerns. Additionally, work of Commonwealth and Irish historians may here find a home, except when careers have been pursued in the United States. Attention will be drawn to marginal cases. British historiography of the Monarchy is naturally influenced by other Anglophone work. Here the relationship with American scholarship will be borne in mind. Historically relevant material need not always be written by historians or academics and the contribution of other informed commentators will be given due weight. Finally, this presentation will touch on all aspects of the historiography, while keeping in view as a key theme British assessments of the Monarchy as a state in the international context.

British historians, the Monarchy and European politics: to 1945

British historiography of the Monarchy developed slowly at first, despite a tradition of political support for Austria as a key factor in the European balance of

power. The nineteenth century saw historians everywhere in Europe preoccupied with the documentation of their native land. Additionally, in Britain laissez-faire traditions delayed the institutionalization of historical studies along central European Rankean lines. The *English Historical Review* (1886) appeared decades after *Historische Zeitschrift* (1859) and its Hungarian counterpart *Századok* (1867), and the tradition of formal training imparted through the graduate seminar was less developed than in central Europe or for that matter the United States. Cultural difference was fed by physical remoteness. Britain was a globally orientated island power, for which European stability mattered chiefly insofar as it left her free to pursue her overseas interests. Henry Wickham Steed, long-standing Vienna correspondent of the London *Times*, reports that of 17,000 subscribers' answers to his paper's request for comments on its coverage only one mentioned foreign affairs, an old woman who wanted more news of Assam because her son was a tea-planter there¹. Anecdote aside, there seems little doubt that the wider British public's engagement with the Monarchy was limited².

This is the background to the fact that little on the Monarchy was written by academic historians between 1850 and 1914. Perhaps the most ambitious British historical project on general history before 1914, the multi-volume *Cambridge Modern History* (1902–1910), intended by its prime mover, the liberal historian Lord Acton, to go beyond a conventional history of states towards a “universal history”, is thin on the Monarchy, reflecting a perceived dissociation between it and the wider themes selected³. For the early modern period Austrian history is largely subsumed in discussion of the Holy Roman Empire; for the later it is subordinated to the rise of Prussian Germany. Relevant contributors were often German or, in the case of Dualism, the Frenchman Louis Eisenmann, suggestive of the work's international ambition but also of the absence of authoritative native expertise. This disregard may have owed something to John Bryce's famous history of the Holy Roman Empire, which denied “odious” Austria any significant link with that Empire's ideals and in the modern context of self-governing nation states saw their inheritance in the German Reich⁴.

Yet the limitations of academic British engagement in the pre-1914 period do not mean these years should be overlooked. The obverse of Britain's non-state orientated culture was the relative abundance of energetic individuals who pursued intellectual interests on their own initiative across the globe. Habsburg-related books between 1850 and 1914, where contemporary history and travelogue mixed with historical exegesis, were written by diplomats or their wives, journalists, teachers of English, people who married into Habsburg society, commentators on European public affairs or wealthy travellers who developed into gentleman scholars.⁵ Imbued with Britain's own version of the national historical narrative of nineteenth-century

¹ Steed, *Through Thirty Years*, vol. 1, p, 273.

² Frank, *Picturing Austria-Hungary*, pp, 79–89.

³ *The Cambridge Modern History*, vol. 1, pp. vi–vii.

⁴ Bryce, *Holy Roman Empire*, pp, 397, 426–428, 440.

⁵ Professional historians still accounted for only some twenty per cent of the 649 works recorded in Bridge's bibliography, *Habsburg Monarchy*.

Europe – a synthesis of constitutional liberty and economic progress through which the British had avoided continental upheavals in the rise to great power status – their work exemplified a mix of liberal and imperial concerns, and also the diversity of positions it could produce. The national poet Tennyson's phrase "freedom broadening down from precedent to precedent" exactly caught the law-abiding note of a British parliamentary constitutionalism accepted by all, but correspondingly open to liberal, conservative or radical inflections. These standpoints, together with strong Protestant convictions, long continued to frame British mentalities.

Unsurprisingly, constitutional principles and religious sentiment outweighed elements of fellow feeling between English and Austrian aristocrats for public opinion at large. Two factors, however, moderated coolness towards the Monarchy in practice. Pervasive patriotic pride made all but the stoutest liberal sensitive to British national interests. Austria was a bulwark against the Russian bear, seen as the main threat to the British Empire and the route to India. Second, Britain as an empire was like the Monarchy a composite state of venerable heritage, in which a dominant culture presided over a variety of other peoples, themselves ranged hierarchically. This applied also to the Celtic/Germanic division in the British Isles themselves. Lord Acton had invoked the Habsburg experience in a famous essay, *Nationality*, in 1862, where he rated the political state based on civic values higher than the ethnic state based on race. He thus saw a beneficial role for a leading nation, like the German speakers in the Habsburg Monarchy and the English in the British Empire, though criticising the pre-March regime⁶. A multiethnic state, under German constitutional leadership, was perfectly acceptable in British eyes. In 1861, however, the more radical liberal John Stuart Mill had warned that differences of nationality in the state, particularly involving language, endangered the 'united public opinion' necessary for representative government. Yet Mill too distinguished between superior cultures and inferior ones, including the Welsh and Scottish Highlanders among the latter⁷. His approach opened the way only potentially for a re-assessment of the Monarchy at a later phase. Since foreign secretary George Canning's ringing endorsement of Latin American freedom from Spain in 1826 ("I called the new world into existence to redress the balance of the old"), support for nationality had figured as part of the official British self-image⁸. A selective vein of quixotic enthusiasm about small nations went back to Byron. But as Eric Hobsbawm has pointed out, mid-nineteenth liberal assumption limited serious consideration of national rights to large groupings like Germans, Italians and Poles.⁹ Nationality had a much qualified place in the liberalism on which Britons took pride. The balance between constitutionality, nationality and stability varied according to circumstance and temperament.

⁶ Dalberg-Acton, *The History of Freedom and other essays*, pp. 271–300.

⁷ Mill, *Utilitarianism*, pp. 359–366. The Durham Report of 1841, arguing on similar lines, had led to the division of Canada into Upper and Lower provinces, effectively English and French speaking respectively.

⁸ Temperley, *Foreign Policy of Canning*, p. 156.

⁹ Hobsbawm, *Nations and nationalism*, p. 42.

Thus at the outset of the period under review judgement on the revolutionary years 1848–1849 combined condemnation of Austria – “[h]er despotism rests on no saving basis of a common nationality” – with sharp criticism of the Hungarian declaration of independence¹⁰. The liberty theme and Britons’ roving interests made Hungary a continuing early preoccupation. Despite several popular biographies, the weightier works were by no means Kossuth worship. Impressed by the civilizational aspirations of the south Slavs, Andrew Paton, an enterprising traveller of the Near East who entered British consular service in the Balkans, preferred Austrian centralism, given general constitutional and cultural rights, to Hungarian nationalism as a means of keeping Russia at bay¹¹. John Paget, settled on his Hungarian wife’s estate and seeing in the more passive Slovaks the “fate” of the British Celts, was less critical of the Magyars, and still less so the first professor of English in Budapest university, Arthur Patterson¹². After 1867 and Magyar nationalism’s successful affirmation British approval, as for the Monarchy as a whole, became less qualified. Ferenc Deák for his anonymous British biographer in 1880 was a Hampden “born in a happier hour”¹³. As the pertinacious moderate, he was the natural hero in Cecil Knatchbull-Hugesson’s political history of 1908. This substantial work combined glowing praise of Hungarians’ struggle for their constitutional rights against faithless Vienna with regret that they had had to violate their legal obligations to the dynasty in 1848. It called on them to accept Deák’s Compromise with an Austria which had learnt its lesson and ultimately represented the West vis-à-vis still more “retrograde” Russia¹⁴. “Separatistic [...] fads” of the “fractional” non-Magyars were tartly dismissed¹⁵. This was the freedom theme in its most conservative British guise. Hence the advocate of Hungary Cecil Knatchbull -Hugesson, an aristocrat married into the Habsburg elite, arrived at the same pro-Habsburg stance as Geoffrey Drage, the Conservative politician and exemplar of the informed policy expert in his massive history of Dualist economic affairs. In both British geopolitical awareness is clearly present¹⁶.

It was present too in the first British gentleman scholar to make the move, eventually, to university professor, with whom systematic British study of the Habsburg lands may be said to begin. Robert W. Seton-Watson, of Scottish landed stock, approached the Monarchy like his contemporaries through the German language, probably never more familiar to the British elite than in these years, and was successively drawn by curiosity to learn Magyar and then Slavic languages¹⁷.

¹⁰ Coxe, *History of the House of Austria*, pp. cxxvii, cxvi–cxvii. These comments came in William Kelley’s extension to 1848 of Archdeacon William Coxe’s well-known book under this title, first published in 1807.

¹¹ Paton, *Highlands and Islands*, vol. 1, pp, vi, 111-112; vol. 2, pp. 152-153.

¹² Paget, *Hungary and Transylvania*, 81. Patterson, *The Magyars*,

¹³ Anon. [Arnold-Forster, Florence], *Deák*, p. x. Hampden was an English parliamentary hero imprisoned by Charles I.

¹⁴ Knatchbull -Hugesson, *Political Evolution*, vol. 2, pp. 79, 245–247.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 322; vol. 2, p. 333.

¹⁶ Drage, *Austria-Hungary*. For Drage’s political perspective see partic. pp.707–724.

¹⁷ For elements of Germanophilia in pre-1914 British historians: Evans, *Creighton Century*, pp. 320–339.

Disillusionment with Magyarization led him to detailed analysis of Magyar policies to non-Magyars from the 1860s in path-breaking books of 1908 and 1911¹⁸. Seton-Watson's strong support for the survival of the Monarchy, albeit reformed, reflected British convention. His abandonment of this commitment in 1914 was undoubtedly influenced by his belief, shared by Henry Wickham Steed, author of a searching study of the Monarchy, that Germany was supplanting Russia as the threat to the British Empire: the Dual Monarchy as Germany's key ally had forfeited its balancing role¹⁹. Seton-Watson's ceaseless campaigning for various political combinations during the war bespeaks a boundless sense of British entitlement to reorder the continent, and of his own role in the process. Yet it reflected more than national egoism alone. Seton-Watson's hopes for Austria rested on belief in the possibility of equal national entitlement in a common state, such as his generation of Scots took to exist in the United Kingdom. He was coming to realise even before the war that this perspective appeared less plausible to South Slavs²⁰.

Personal admiration for Slav and Romanian leaders, belying ideas that they belonged to "inferior" ethnicities, facilitated his switch to a John Stuart Mill nation-state model, to be implemented in a 'New Europe'. Byron's quixotism can be seen in the enthusiastic support of the New Europe by men like the archaeologists Ronald Montagu Burrows and (later Sir) Arthur Evans, excavator of Knossos. Several English envoys at Versailles, in the words of the historian-diplomat Harold Nicolson "sang hymns round heaven's gate", at the thought of the new Serbia, the new Bohemia, the new Poland²¹. Harold Temperley, co-editor of British documents on the origins of the First World War, also published a history of Serbia in 1917. Seton-Watson's later career reflected the drive to provide a historiographical underpinning for what had happened in 1918. The British Hungarian historian, László Péter, has shrewdly judged that British liberals' attitude to small nation nationalism has been ultimately linked to the characteristic wish for constitutional stability and order²². Where the Monarchy was judged to have failed, a new order was required.

The actual historiographical consequence of the First World War was a certain bifurcation. While Seton-Watson's energies, as a leading founder of the School of Slavonic Studies in London (1915), centred around the Monarchy's "succession states", Britain's leading diplomatic historians were drawn by the collapse of the European state system and the Versailles settlement to reflect on the Congress of Vienna and the European Concert after it, where Metternich was a key figure. Of these, Llewelyn Woodward and George Peabody Gooch did write on other Habsburg themes, Joseph II and Maria Theresa respectively. Behind the bifurcation there remained in the interwar years, indeed, a commonality of background. Britain was

¹⁸ Seton-Watson, *Racial Problems in Hungary*; Idem, *Southern Slav Question*.

¹⁹ For Seton-Watson's conditional prewar support for the Monarchy, see *Ibid.*, *Southern Slav Question*, pp. vii, 177, 337. For Steed's belief that Austria-Hungary was a prisoner of Germany see his *The Habsburg Monarchy* (1913) and also his memoir *Through Thirty years*, vol.1, pp 261, 323.

²⁰ Seton-Watson, Hugh and Christopher, *New Europe*, p. 76.

²¹ Nicolson, *Peacemaking*, p. 26.

²² Péter *Seton-Watson's Changing Views*, pp. 438–465.

an imperial power at its maximum extent, preoccupied with international crises in Ireland, Egypt, India and mandated Palestine, as well as the transition from empire to Commonwealth for the so-called White Dominions. This explains the interest in international relations: chairs in International Politics were founded in the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth (1919), the London School of Economics (1924) and Oxford (1930). But it also explains Seton-Watson's concerns: his aspiration to provide encouragement and forum to east-central European scholars on behalf of the liberal values he believed his country stood for in the new order. These values were reflected also in the diplomatic historians, despite differences of emphasis between Harold Temperley, historian of foreign secretary Canning, and Charles Webster, temperamentally more akin to his conservative predecessor Castlereagh. Indeed, it was Webster who wrote that the outcome of Metternich's diplomatic skill was to entrench "a system of repression and negation" in place of the "splendid hopes" of the War of Liberation²³. Another eminent diplomatic historian, Llewelyn Woodward, was still more trenchant²⁴. All the more interesting, then, was the eloquent endorsement of Metternich's skepticism about nineteenth-century liberalism and nationalism by the former Conservative foreign secretary Algernon Cecil, in the most significant of a number of Metternich biographies²⁵.

Yet interwar Britain was an over-extended power. The fortunes of the School of Slavonic Studies showed the limitations of the liberal empire for which Seton-Watson had hoped to train specialists. The first institution in Britain with an area studies brief, the School and its journal *The Slavonic Review* (later *The Slavonic and East European Review*), dealt extensively with Czechoslovak, Galician and south Slav historical and cultural themes, with a purpose as much educative as academic; Romanian and later on Hungarian topics also figured. Treatment of Austro-Germans and the Monarchy as such was confined to occasional reviews by Seton-Watson, who had become holder of a new Masaryk Chair of Central European History in the University of London in 1922. But the School received niggardly official support, and attracted few students, so had to rely on language teaching and foreign funding; its status within the University of London was long unclear and its facilities inadequate²⁶. Britain in the 1930s had less than sixty thousand university students. Despite the institutionalization that the School represented, Carlile Macartney, the leading new specialist on the Danubian lands was, like Seton-Watson before him, a gentleman scholar, as was Gooch and the large majority of some twenty authors who published on this area between the wars, rarely touching on domestic affairs. Two shorter works by significant figures show that the liberal critique dominant in 1918 still prevailed. Wickham Steed, now a university lecturer teacher, emphasized the inflexibility of Emperor Franz Joseph. Lewis Namier argued that the triple domination of Austro-Germans, Magyars and Poles was irremediably unbalanced

²³ Webster, *Foreign Policy of Castlereagh*, p. 176

²⁴ Woodward, *Three Studies*, pp. 16–108. Woodward also wrote on Joseph II.

²⁵ Cecil, *Metternich*, partic. 10–20, 45–52.

²⁶ Roberts, *History of the School*.

by the First World War, whether the Central Powers won or lost²⁷. Namier (later Sir Lewis Namier), a Galician Jew by birth, became an acclaimed historian of England in the interwar years²⁸. Thus Seton-Watson's lonely position was not fundamentally challenged. In particular his *History of the Czechs and Slovaks*, published in the Second World War but partly written before it, amounted effectively to a study of the Monarchy as a whole. Old-fashioned in approach, its speculation that, had the facts adduced been available earlier, the book might have served as a "timely warning" shows the author's highly political sense of his role and importance²⁹. It is however impressive in the sweep of interrelated narrative from 1526. The early problem of the Monarchy is seen in the tug between German and south-eastern orientations and the intransigence of the Catholic Church, of the later in its failure to meet the rise of nationality³⁰. Seton-Watson is true to his liberal constitutionalism in putting almost as much blame on Czech tactical obstinacy as Austrian German obtuseness, just as he had looked askance at "the crime" of Sarajevo in a book on 1914³¹. Leopold II, not the over "doctrinaire" and "autocratic" Joseph II, or his mother, is chosen as the best of the Habsburgs³². Overriding, however, is the "numbing influence" of Franz Joseph, his misplaced faith in the "canker" of Dualism and his connivance at Magyar policies³³. It is implied that a solution might have been reached with more will in the Hofburg, but the point is not pursued, setting a precedent for vagueness on this score³⁴.

Two other significant but very different figures concerned themselves with internal affairs in this period. Carlile Macartney (1895–1978), of Irish Protestant landlord descent, came to his Hungarian specialism by the familiar route via initial interest in Austria. Published by the Royal Institute of International Affairs in 1937, his major work explored the fortunes of the territories taken from Hungary by the Treaty of Trianon and was intended as a contribution to problems of treaty revision³⁵. Yet necessarily it contained much information on the pre-1918 situation. While Macartney accepted Seton-Watson's criticisms of official nationality policy in Dualist Hungary, he was more willing to accept that Magyarisation could also be a voluntary process. By contrast, A.J.P. Taylor was a new type of visitor to Vienna, a northern England radical of relatively humble background, with an academic trajectory in mind. His book on the Habsburg Monarchy, first published in 1941, show-cased his brilliant, hard-hitting narrative style, yielding argument through paradox. The comprehensively rewritten 1948 version added to paradoxes, in places

²⁷ Steed, *Doom of Habsburgs*; NAMIER, *Downfall of Monarchy*, Idem, *Vanished Supremacies*, This essay was first written in 1919.

²⁸ For Namier's Habsburg background, see Julia Namier, *Lewis Namier*.

²⁹ Seton-Watson, *Czechs and Slovaks*, p. 5.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 93-94, 204.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 209, 218; Seton-Watson, *Sarajevo*, p. 129.

³² Seton-Watson, *Czechs and Slovaks*, pp. 152, 160.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 312, 244.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 242, 249.

³⁵ Macartney, *Hungary and her Successors*, p. v.

more show than substance, but retained some factual errors³⁶. Basically, the main arguments remained the same, though the hopeful gloss on the Kremsier settlement was dropped. Taylor grounded his political narrative on a strong social argument for the importance of the emancipation and subsequent partial urbanization of the peasantry. This politicized ethnicity, making nationalism and the relations of “historic” peoples, “non-historic” peoples and the dynasty the central issues of the later Monarchy. “The conflict between a supra-national dynastic state and the national principle had to be fought to the finish; and so, too, had the conflict between the master and subject nations”³⁷. Several of Taylor’s insights anticipate later tropes: the three-stage development of nationalism; the fact that the nations fought against each other, not the state; and that most people went about their business oblivious of their national “oppression” till alerted by nationalist activists³⁸. Flamboyance apart, his emphases actually followed Seton-Watson’s quite closely: the critique of Austrian German arrogance, of the dynasty and above all of Hungarian nationality policies, the praise for the “noble” moderate Deák, the esteem for Masaryk and Czech culture³⁹. The socialist Taylor is an interesting illustration of the common threads which run through a national historiography, for all differences of temperament and affiliation, and which are clearer in treatments of foreign themes⁴⁰. To be sure, a certain sharper tone is evident in Taylor. Seton-Watson’s concerns with the political organization of central Europe had always been linked with notions of British liberal mission and his embrace of the national principle. For Taylor, the dispassionate academic, politics was about power, the basis on which he charged Robert Kann with failing to see that the Monarchy was not an exercise in multi-nationalism but a supranational instrument of dynastic will⁴¹. A cooler attitude to the nationality principle by the end of the Second World War can be seen also in Alfred Cobban’s distinction between west and east Europeans’ understanding of national self-determination and, in a different context, Namier’s famous critique of the “revolution of the intellectuals” in central Europe in 1848⁴².

It is commonalities which this section of the chapter has sought to stress, however. Up to 1945 British historiography of the Habsburg Monarchy was limited in volume, but it engaged some of the leading historians of the age because of the great issues in which the Monarchy, like Britain, were involved, and because it raised questions affecting the core values held by British historians as members of

³⁶ Taylor, *Habsburg Monarchy*. Examples are Taylor’s treatment of Croatian politics in the years after 1868 and his idiosyncratic denial of the ‘invented’ Ukrainian nationality.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 9 (1948 edn), p. i,

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 41, 216 (1941 edn); Taylor, *Failure of Habsburg Monarchy*, *Idem.*, *Europe*, pp. 128-129 (three stages).

³⁹ The adjective “noble” (Taylor, *Habsburg Monarchy*, 1941 edn, p. 118) disappeared from the second edition. For the high view of Czech culture, see the 1941 version, p. 227.

⁴⁰ For Taylor, see Coxe, *Taylor: Traitor*.

⁴¹ Taylor, *Failure of Habsburg Monarchy*, 127-132.

⁴² Cobban, *Nation State*; Namier, *Revolution of Intellectuals*. Cobban concluded, essentially, that the world should be governed under the auspices of Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union.

a cohesive national culture. The postwar period requires a separate framing, both as concerns Britain and the study of history.

Post-1945: elements of continuity amid diversification

Social and political changes eroded the leisured upper middle class from which men like Seton-Watson, Macartney and Gooch had come. Assumptions of interaction between an intellectual and a political elite in a governing class had already been dealt a blow by official rejection of the role they wished to play in the Second World War⁴³. Knowledge of German in such circles declined. The tradition of the independent historian was not extinct, though now linked to journalism rather than private means: Gordon Brook-Shepherd, biographer of the emperor Karl and other Habsburgs, and Edward Crankshaw reflected continued interest in Habsburg matters from the level of an educated public, if not academia.⁴⁴ Ultimately the decline of Britain's global role narrowed horizons. English-language work on the Monarchy became overwhelmingly an American affair, reflected by the launching of the *Journal of Central European Affairs* in 1944 and the *Austrian History Newsletter/Yearbook* in 1961/65. Historical publication in Britain increased from an average of some 348 books a year on European history in 1946–56 to 531 in 1971–75, but more than four-fifths of these were on British and Irish history. Works on Austrian, Hungarian and Czechoslovak history totalled 27 in each period, or 4.1% and 5.8% of all those on continental Europe. If translations, new editions and books falling outside the Habsburg period are excluded the annual figures relevant to the present theme are five and ten respectively⁴⁵. The main interests of Seton-Watson's longest-serving successor as Professor of Central European history in London, Francis Carsten, lay outside the Monarchy. Carsten bore witness, however to one tendency in which Britain followed the United States after the war: the growing role which foreign-born scholars were coming to play in research on Habsburg-related topics. Helmut Koenigsberger, Peter Pulzer, Zbyněk Zeman, Harry Hanak, Ernst Wangermann and László Péter all began working in Britain in the early postwar decades.

Meanwhile, the 1960s saw a breakthrough in Britain for social history and the use of sociological and anthropological insights. In following decades cultural history became increasingly influential and in its wake postmodernist, global and other discourses further broadened the range of historical perspectives. From the mid-1960s university expansion in Britain dramatically increased student numbers. This drive, and the accompanying regimen of targets, research assessments and "impact"-orientated state funding were responses to a felt need to modernize Britain in a competitive environment, and to justify public expenditure. These trends doubtless worked against Habsburg studies in relative terms. Outside major universities like London, Oxford and Cambridge, which also attract foreign postgraduates

⁴³ Beretsky, Devoted Friend; Seton-Watson, H and C, *New Europe*, pp. 428-431.

⁴⁴ Brook-Shepherd, *The Last Habsburg* (London 1968); Crankshaw, *House of Habsburg*.

⁴⁵ Calculated from *Bibliography of historical works*.

interested in Habsburg-related themes, specialists, while growing in number, lagged behind historians of the other traditional European powers. Some 74 doctorates on Habsburg-related subjects were completed between 1945 and 2013, a small percentage of British historical doctorates as a whole, which rose from around 140 to 600 annually in the period⁴⁶. Inevitably, though, there have been somewhat wider thematic concerns, even in traditional fields of British interest. The result has been a pattern of innovation and continuity. The issue of the Monarchy as factor in the European state system in a nationalist age has retained its appeal, but the Jewish experience and the cultural/intellectual efflorescence of fin-de-siècle Austria have also attracted attention. The early modern period, largely neglected before 1945 except as background, has developed a significant scholarly profile, and the reform movement of the Austrian Enlightenment has also seen some notable studies. The discussion below describes these distinctive features, while attempting to situate British work in the framework of anglophone Habsburg historiography of which it is now a minor component.

The early modern history of the Monarchy has quite different characteristics from what followed. Its focus is on state formation rather than decline, as the Monarchy emerged from the chrysalis of the Holy Roman Empire. Unlike British work on the later period whose roots lie in a native discourse of liberal democracy, early modern historiography is integrated in an academic enquiry into notions of a purported “absolutism” which is European in scope. In place of the triumph of absolutism over provincial estates has come greater recognition of the role of the latter alongside central government in the ‘coordinating state’ and of religion’s place in the potential contestation. The interrelation of political, religious and social flux in a turbulent age makes for a richly layered history, and British Habsburgists are closer to British colleagues working in the wider central European context than are their later modern counterparts. Helmut Koenigsberger’s concept of composite monarchies like the Habsburg Empire played an important part in evolving discussion. It provides a significant example of the impact of a Habsburgist’s work on British historiography, aiding a new focus on the multinational dimension of the “English Civil War”, from which developed a certain vogue for “four nations history” over a longer span⁴⁷. More recently, in major interventions Joachim Whaley and Peter Wilson have applied revised notions of early modern statehood to the Holy Roman Empire itself. Far from Bryce’s disparagement, they see it as reflecting an evolving form of decentralized constitutionality, resting on a distinctive German tradition of corporate, consensus-based governance, which remained important in the purview of Habsburg rulers almost till its end⁴⁸. Wilson argues for a relatively late conscious Habsburg move towards notions of separate sovereignty and underlines the empire’s and the emerging Monarchy’s continued Italian links. Nor did the much-maligned imperial courts function so badly.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Calculated from *Historical Research* My figures exclude research MAs and MPhils.

⁴⁷ Koenigsberger, *Habsburgs and Europe*, p. 9. For the adaptation to Britain: Russell, *Fall*, pp. 37–41; Kearney, *British Isles*.

⁴⁸ Whaley, *Germany and Holy Roman Empire*, partic. vol. 1, pp. 1–17, 640; vol. 2, pp. 3–10, 417–418, 546.

⁴⁹ Wilson, *Heart of Europe*, pp. 427–82 and *passim*.

Meanwhile, the period's religious dimension has been explored in several studies: the Irish historian Graeme Murdock's investigation of the Hungarian role in international Calvinism, Elaine Fulton's work on the counter-Reformation protagonist Georg Eder, and the monograph on Styria by the German-born but British-based Regina Pörtner, which takes the implications of Church and lay leaders' mutual dependence in the protracted process of Counter-Reformation – highlighted also by Fulton – well beyond the dates of her title⁵⁰. Tom Scott on Austrian Freiburg and the Breisgau and Sheilagh Ogilvie on seventeenth-century Bohemian serfs show an openness to modern, social-orientated themes largely lacking in historians of the later Monarchy⁵¹. Other topics have been broached which have been little touched on by British scholars of the later period: military history by John Stoye and Andrew Wheatfield (the latter alert to contemporary interest in cultural representation); and legal history in László Péter and Martyn Rady's role in the translation and explication of the influential sixteenth-century Hungarian jurist István Werbőczy⁵². In a productive field a particular place goes to Peter Wilson's panoramic survey of the Thirty Years' War. It was a fitting successor for English-speaking readers to Veronica Wedgwood's survey from the interwar years, a widely popular product of extensive research in the best spirit of the "gentleman scholar" tradition⁵³.

The biggest contribution to the history of the emerging Monarchy, however, has come from the (now retired) Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford, R. J. W. Evans. With his equally grounded knowledge of the Monarchy's German, Hungarian and Czech-speaking lands and his comprehensive treatment of socio-political, cultural and intellectual themes, he offered a path-breaking interpretation for the early modern period as a whole⁵⁴. In it the critique of an absolutist-orientated approach is taken well beyond the defeat of Bohemian rebellion in 1620, to present a largely consensual linkage of monarch and regionally based magnates, lubricated by Counter-Reformation Catholicism and a distinctive Baroque culture. Evans rejects discussion of European civilization in terms of backward east and progressive west and argues for the central European zone occupied by the Monarchy as a distinctive cultural sphere in its own right. Yet the conditionality of this sphere's emergence, as in all historical process, is caught in his reference to the period 1550–1600 as a "false dawn" in which the Danube lands stood closest to western European norms⁵⁵. The empathetic appreciation of the more "closed" Baroque culture which succeeded it is combined with awareness of its weaknesses, stemming from the incomplete triumph of Counter-Reformation values, leaving it vulnerable to the challenge of the Enlightenment and the return of pre-Baroque traditions revived in localist/nationalist forms. The dynasty responded with "a new conception of official

⁵⁰ Murdock, *Calvinism*; Fulton, *Catholic belief*; Pörtner, *Counter-Reformation*.

⁵¹ Scott, *Freiburg and the Breisgau*; Ogilvie, *Communities*.

⁵² Stoye, *Siege of Vienna*; Idem, *Marsiglio's Europe*; Wheatcroft, *Enemy at the Gate; The Customary Law*.

⁵³ Wilson, *Europe's Tragedy*; Wedgwood, *Thirty Years War*.

⁵⁴ Evans, *Making of Habsburg Monarchy*.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. xxiii.

spiritual conformity” reflected in Josephinism⁵⁶. The multi-faceted sophistication of the analysis of the mentalities of the age as compared to earlier historiography appears in Evans’s monograph on Rudolf II, of whom Seton-Watson could only write: “never in [the Monarchy’s] long history anything so pitiable or so eccentric as Rudolf [...] the most incompetent and negative” of all its rulers⁵⁷.

Evans’s work thus points ahead to the Austrian Enlightenment. This period also sees a certain concentration of early modern British work. The chief development has been growing awareness of the existence of reform currents in wider circles than the dynasty and its immediate advisors and a resiling from notions of a revolutionary Joseph – Taylor had called him “the [French] Convention in a single man”⁵⁸. The tendency in English-speaking historiography around the liberal 1960s for Joseph II to be criticized from the left may be seen as conjuncturally related, though its reflection in Ernst Wangermann’s work came in a career only partly pursued in Britain⁵⁹. The two major British contributors to the field have been outstanding not so much for conceptual innovation as the exemplary thoroughness of their research, a quality particularly important where the sheer complexity of subject matter and source material can easily lead to the recycling of misinformation. Here Peter Dickson’s elucidation of Austrian statistics and Derek Beales’s comprehensive biography of Joseph II have performed invaluable service. The former probes into the tissues of Austrian society, the latter into the heart of the relationship between Joseph and his mother⁶⁰. The theme of reform touches the core of the British liberal gradualist tradition, whose differing emphases are reflected in attitudes to the empress and her impatient son. Though thoroughly alive to Joseph’s defects of personality, Beales presents a figure less belligerent in foreign policy and readier to respond to advice than in more hostile appraisals; it is tempting to see in Dickson’s verdict that Maria Theresa was basically a feudal monarch empathy with more conservative continuities⁶¹. In another major historian’s treatment domestic questions are set squarely in a foreign political context. For Tim Blanning the ease with which Leopold II’s diplomacy defused the empire’s crisis after Joseph’s death suggests “a classic example of the primacy of foreign policy”⁶². It is a straw in the wind, matched by Hamish Scott’s interpretations of eighteenth-century foreign policy, and attempts to roll back notions of the primacy of domestic policy felt to have become too prominent⁶³. In stressing the deep-seated nature of “reform Catholicism” Blanning shares common ground. Robert Evans has argued that at a

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 449.

⁵⁷ Evans, *Rudolf II and his world. A Study in intellectual history, 1576-1612* (Oxford, 1973); Seton-Watson, *Czechs and Slovaks*, pp. 96, 105.

⁵⁸ Taylor, *Habsburg Monarchy* (1948 edn), p. 19.

⁵⁹ Wangermann, *From Joseph II*. Wangermann has also contributed an admirable survey: *The Austrian Achievement*, 1973.

⁶⁰ Beales, *Joseph II*; Dickson, *Finance and Government*.

⁶¹ Dickson, *Finance and Government*, vol. 1, p. 325.

⁶² Blanning, *Joseph II*, p. 202.

⁶³ Scott, *Emergence of Eastern Powers*; *Idem, Birth of Great Power System*; Simms, *Primacy of Foreign Policy*.

grass roots level a “Counter-Counter-Reformation”, questioning Baroque religion and more open to tolerance and civic values, was important in preparing the ground for what has been dubbed “Josephinism”. Always keeping in view both the centre and the regions, he sees a transition from a court to a state-based culture in this period, as army, bureaucracy, and economic management came to complement the triad of dynasty, Church and noble elite⁶⁴.

The later modern period has still drawn probably the greater part of British postwar attention. One work, Carlile Macartney’s survey of the empire from 1790, published in 1968, deserves special note as the most comprehensive in English, particularly rich in socio-economic and financial matters. Overall, Macartney, the candid friend of the Magyars, represented the more conservative wing of the British liberal constitutional approach, as the more radical Seton-Watson had been the candid friend of the Slavs. Yet there are affinities. Both, besides their national specialisms, combined an exhaustive knowledge of the German-language historical and autobiographical literature with a lifetime’s sense of familiarity with the Habsburg lands. While Macartney conceded that socio-economic issues concerned many citizens more than “national” disputes of the politicians, his book shared basic features of traditional British critiques. It was an assessment of viability, or, as he called it, “the history of the retreat”⁶⁵. The verdict on Metternich was essentially negative; “the fundamental philosophy of the system” set in the 1850s that the state was a-national had failed in face of mounting national feeling; Austrian Germans’ sense of themselves as a “staatserhaltendes Element” was basically incompatible with post-1867 perspectives of popularly-based government. In 1914 the peoples of the Monarchy were further apart than ever, so that its future was “at best problematical”. Macartney concluded that foreign and domestic factors were inextricably tied up in the dissolution which followed in 1918⁶⁶.

These central themes dominated the treatment of the Monarchy in general surveys. The Marxist Eric Hobsbawm stressed “increasingly unmanageable national problems” facing a state which remained a great power only through its size and international convenience. The south Slav problem was the most dangerous because this involved both halves of the Monarchy and tied in with the Balkan question; Austria-Hungary was virtually doomed after the collapse of the Ottomans unless it could prove its vitality in this arena⁶⁷. To James Joll in a well-known textbook in 1973 the failure of Austrian universal suffrage to stem nationalism suggested the problem was insoluble; Austria-Hungary and Russia were described together as “autocratic countries” and the Index contained the ominous entry: “Austria-Hungary: subject nationalities in”⁶⁸. Habsburg specialists ranged somewhat more widely: nationalism, the dynastic nature of the state, Hungary/dualism figured as

⁶⁴ Evans, *Austria, Hungary, and the Habsburgs*, pp. 44-55, 73 and *passim*; Blanning, *Joseph II*, pp. 40-44, 51.

⁶⁵ Macartney, *Habsburg Empire*, pp. 637, 2.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 190-192, 441, 637-638, 652, 810.

⁶⁷ Hobsbawm, *Age of Empire*, pp. 322-324.

⁶⁸ Joll, *Europe since 1870*, pp. 122, 175.

long-term issues, and the Balkan question and the war as proximate ones. The international framework (Concert of Europe or alliance system) could be both. Participants in the field were too few to engage in overt mutual debate, though differences of emphasis were apparent. Alan Sked agreed with Macartney on the interaction of foreign and domestic issues and with Hobsbawm on the importance of the Balkans, but broke new ground in his attack on ideas of inevitable decline. The Monarchy's greatest crisis had come in 1848–49; thereafter the economy strengthened, the nationalities did not seek to overthrow the state; in implicit contradiction of Macartney domestic circumstances were, "if anything", improving before 1914. For Sked, however, the dynastic issue was crucial; Franz Joseph's concept of his role and honour led him into a war in 1914 which could have been avoided⁶⁹. In his view of the Monarchy's staying power Sked was no doubt influenced by his work on Radetzky's successful come-back in Lombardy in 1848–49, an important monograph paralleled by another on Habsburg Venice in the revolution⁷⁰. Sked did take explicit issue with the American diplomatic historian Schroeder's argument that a desirable European Concert was undermined by British Whiggery, which helped precipitate both the war and the dissolution of the Monarchy at its end⁷¹. While the leading British diplomatic historian Francis Roy Bridge questioned aspects of British policy he stressed other factors weakening the Monarchy's position: the narrowing of its diplomatic options as nationalism affected even Tsarist Russia, and the negative role of the German alliance⁷². He presented the Monarchy as a "weak agrarian power", deprived of an economic base for military assertion and dependent on diplomatic skill and the chance of shifting alignments⁷³. Though other powers largely accepted the nationality question as the Monarchy's internal concern, its elites' passive acceptance of the problems raised, particularly by Hungarian policy under dualism, increased their exposure to factors outside their control, leading them in 1914 to risk all on German victory⁷⁴. Discussions of the path to war and breakup almost inevitably acquire a negative aura. Christopher Clark's recent best-seller, *The Sleepwalkers*, avoids censoriousness not by denying the weaknesses of Austria-Hungary's pre-war leaders but by detailing the errors of the other powers and the relative decency of the regime which was to fall⁷⁵.

The Seton-Watson legacy is evident in the attention directed to the wartime years 1914–1918, if not in the conclusions. The Czech-born but British-based scholar Zbyněk Zeman prompted a new phase in discussion of the theme of the Monarchy's break-up by sharply downgrading the role traditionally credited to the Slav exiles. In Zeman's picture the strategic calculations of the Allied powers were overwhelmingly more important. Decisive was the collapse of hopes to win

⁶⁹ Sked, *Decline and Fall*, pp. 256 (quotation), 267–269. In a second edition, Sked broadens but somewhat polemicizes his argument: Idem, *Decline and Fall*, pp. 278–323.

⁷⁰ Sked, *Survival of Habsburg Empire*; Ginsborg, *Manin*.

⁷¹ Sked, *Decline and Fall*, 1st edn. pp. 246–247.

⁷² Bridge, *Sadowa to Sarajevo*.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁷⁴ *Österreich-Ungarn*, 367–368.

⁷⁵ Clark *Sleepwalkers*, partic. pp. 76–78.

Austria-Hungary for a separate peace in 1918⁷⁶. In following years this theme of the relationship of propaganda and diplomacy in the Monarchy's eclipse was returned to repeatedly, wholly or partly from a British angle. The evolution of British public attitudes towards the Monarchy during the war; British monitoring of the Slav exile movement in America and elsewhere; and the formulation of British Habsburg policy in the context of international diplomacy are examples of topics which have received monographic treatment⁷⁷. The role of Seton-Watson was the subject of a detailed study by his sons⁷⁸. British concern with the field has been capped most recently by Mark Cornwall's comprehensive examination of the role and efficacy of wartime propaganda in the strategy both of the Monarchy and its opponents⁷⁹. Certain themes have emerged from this relatively sustained enquiry. The characteristic cast of British constitutional democracy came out in its conservative aspect in the continued degree of empathy with a fellow empire revealed on the part of British leaders even when in conflict with it, and in their disinclination to see a venerable state vanish from the European stage. On the other hand, the Monarchy no longer figured importantly in its own right in British calculations. A fairly widespread sense of its decrepitude seems to have existed in influential circles and it was seen essentially in terms of its relationship with Germany. Hence successive initiatives to weaken the Monarchy as Germany's partner through Italy and Romania, however tactical in origin, were made without systematic concern almost to the war's end for their cumulative effect on the Monarchy's viability. As the war dragged on the felt need to justify its sacrifices led to pressures for more clearly defined war goals which liberals like Seton-Watson used to project an alternative vision of a "New Europe" on national lines. Officials drawn into relations with anti-Habsburg exiles for opportunistic reasons became familiar with ideas of self-determination quite foreign to British diplomacy at the outset, a familiarity which could become increasingly sympathetic as hopes for a separate peace faded. Thus interpretation could do justice both to Zeman's pathbreaking exposé of the overriding strategic concerns of the powers and to the role of exiles in inserting national questions onto the international agenda. But Cornwall's work has corrected the exaggerated emphasis on British war propaganda in earlier accounts. It has broadened enquiry, particularly with regard to the Italian propaganda campaigns; and it has deepened it by systematically demonstrating propaganda's strictly limited role.

British scholarship on the later Monarchy has thus continued to be fruitful in fields of traditional strength. A new journal, *Central Europe*, published by the School of Slavonic Studies from 2003 should also be mentioned. It has responded, too, to some of the impulses felt following the cultural turn in historical studies. These

⁷⁶ Zeman, *Break=up*.

⁷⁷ Hanak, *Great Britain and Austria-Hungary*; Calder, *Britain and New Europe*; Fest, *Peace or Partition*. I mention Fest, a German scholar, in this connection as his work originated as an Oxford doctorate and its historiographical context is very largely British as is Calder's, a Canadian.

⁷⁸ Seton-Watson, H. and C. *Making of New Europe*.

⁷⁹ Cornwall, *Undermining of Austria-Hungary*. Together with John Paul Newman, Cornwall has also contributed an intriguing study on a Habsburg-related topic: *Sacrifice and \Rebirth*

have been very largely, however, the preserve in the anglophone world of the more numerous cohorts of American scholarship. The cultural efflorescence highlighted by Carl Schorske, the political life less negatively presented by Pieter Judson and John Boyer and prior work on growth trends in the Dualist economy have helped underpin a sense of potential for an interpretation of the later Monarchy in different terms from Macartney's "retreat". In a seminal article Gary Cohen called in 1998 for historians to look for the neglected positive aspects of the Habsburg experience⁸⁰. British contributions within this sphere have not necessarily come from historians narrowly defined. Germanists have been active in cultural and intellectual history, both individually and through *Austrian Studies*, appearing annually in Edinburgh since 1990. Themed volumes have covered topics like the Austrian Enlightenment, the Habsburg legacy, Freud, and Herzl. The founding editors, Edward Timms and Ritchie Robertson, are authors of important works on Karl Kraus and Franz Kafka respectively⁸¹. William Yates was perhaps the leading Anglophone scholar of the nineteenth-century Austrian theatre, a theme of socio-political as well as literary importance, while the musicologist David Wyn Jones has written extensively on Haydn and Beethoven and Matthew Rampley on Austrian art⁸². The main British contributor to study of Austrian feminism themes, Harriet Anderson, trained as a Germanist; Andrew Wheatcroft wrote on representations of the Habsburgs as a lecturer in English⁸³.

Clear from the above is the substantial British contribution to the flourishing of Jewish studies. Peter Pulzer was an early figure to set anti-Semitism in the context of modern liberalism's rejection by traditionalist elements in the region⁸⁴. Robert Wistrich, London-born but now Jerusalem-based, shows how research has moved on to examine identity issues of the Jews themselves⁸⁵. Steven Beller, a productive independent scholar, has played a leading role in the discussion⁸⁶. His thesis that Jews' status as a discriminated community prompted universalist aspirations on their part, which gave them a crucial role in the transition from tradition to modernity, goes to the heart of debates about Austrian liberalism, the phenomenon of 'Vienna 1900' and anti-Semitic reactions to modernity⁸⁷. Four of the seven main protagonists of Jonathan Kwan's probing study of late nineteenth-century Austrian German liberalism were Jewish. A long-term review editor of the internet site Habsburg.com, Kwan takes issue with Judson on the continuity of the liberal movement, which he plausibly qualifies as nationalist in its later decades⁸⁸.

Nationalism has been one of the leading themes of the new anglophone Habsburg historiography. Questioning perceived assumptions of nationalism's

⁸⁰ Cohen, *New Narratives*. *AHYB* 29, 1998, 37–61.

⁸¹ Robertson, *Kafka*; Timms, *Karl Kraus*.

⁸² For example, Yates, *Theatre in Vienna*; Jones, *Music in Vienna*; Rampley, *Vienna School*.

⁸³ Anderson *Utopian Feminism*; Wheatcroft, *Habsburgs: embodying empire*.

⁸⁴ Pulzer, *Rise of Political Anti-Semitism*.

⁸⁵ Wistrich, *Jews of Vienna*.

⁸⁶ See his 'Introduction' to *Rethinking Vienna 1900*, pp. 1–25.

⁸⁷ Beller, *Vienna and the Jews*.

⁸⁸ Kwan, *Liberalism*.

pervasive role, local studies have registered widespread bilingualism and national indifference. Taken together with the emphasis on this Monarchy's achievements, a perspective emerges for re-evaluation, in which the national factor is not seen as an aspect of modernity, asserting itself, however divisively, against an outmoded social and dynastic system, but as an ideological force corroding the structures of a potentially forward-looking civic pluralism. These are fascinating perspectives, and the need for a great many more detailed studies against which generalisations can be tested emerges as a vital field for future research. British specialists are too few to have made much impact on this potentially vast field, though Laurence Cole's work on national consciousness and Habsburg patriotism in the German-Italian-south Slav borderland is a valuable contribution to the theme of regional variety⁸⁹. It should be said that new approaches are in their early stages and that bilingual towns like Budweis/České Budějovice or German-Slav border regions cannot necessarily be a basis for generalisation. Recent emphasis of multiculturalism and multilingualism in the Monarchy begs certain questions. Traditionally, multilingualism has been more a feature of undeveloped or tribal societies than of modern ones; the ability to bargain in a market does not connote ability to write a convincing job application. Research on national questions will benefit from the insights of social linguistics. Indeed, Robert Evans's Oxford inaugural lecture broached the important linguistic theme⁹⁰. His work and that of Macartney is also a necessary check on tendencies in recent anglophone historiography to treat Cisleithania as if it were the Monarchy, overlooking the problems Dualist Hungary poses for too sanguine a presentation of evolving democracy. Evans provides a counterweight to the tendency to blame the Hungarians for tensions between the two leading peoples of the Monarchy. Hostile Austrian stereotypes of Hungary and the "assymetrical intellectual relation" whereby educated Magyars knew German but not vice-versa, helped foster 'a gradual alienation' after 1867⁹¹. British historiography actually offers a take on a uniquely Hungarian tradition in László Péter's astringent analyses of Hungarian constitutional law, though one hesitates to claim this dual patriot with his keen interest in west European liberal traditions for any country but Hungary⁹². It is understandable, given memories of the Holocaust and the wars of the 1990s, that the national question, on which British and American liberals criticised the Monarchy, is now the ground on which, also from liberal premises, it is increasingly defended. But revulsion at nationalism can lead to overstatement and a blurring of insights already reached. Historians from large nations are prone to be dismissive of small ones. There is some exaggeration of the degree to which an older historiography bought into nationalist narratives

⁸⁹ Cole, "Für Gott"; Idem, *Military Culture*, where Cole notes, more widely, support for Habsburg patriotism in Austrian veteran associations but also how efforts to assert government control of these bodies clashed with the workings of parliamentary democracy and divergent national currents.

⁹⁰ Evans, *Language*, Idem; *Language and State-building*, *AHYB* 35, 2004, pp. 1–24.

⁹¹ Evans, *Austria, Hungary, and the Habsburgs*, pp. 228–265, partic. 231, 264–265.

⁹² Péter, *Hungary's Nineteenth Century*.

about the Monarchy. A.J.P. Taylor for one anticipated current arguments about national indifference and the role of nationalist ideologues, and thought the chief cause of the Monarchy's downfall was not nationalism, but the absence of any sustaining idea other than the dynastic⁹³. Nor was nationalism the only potentially destabilising factor. The social turn in historiography of the 1960s increasingly linked the national question with the social. The clash between secular modernity and mobilizing religion has become more salient both through historiography and contemporary events, as has the febrile nature of great power relationships. The significance of nationalism was to create frameworks, through social mobilisation based on mother-tongue education, which in times of crisis like 1918 could offer alternatives to traditional structures. In 2001 the present writer sought to capture nationalism's ambiguities by distinguishing between its ideological and functional roles, the former showing the limitations of its penetration remarked on above, the latter the much wider role it could potentially play when authority wavered⁹⁴. The aim, within a survey of the later Monarchy, was to do justice to it as a European state undergoing similar modern processes, socio-economic and politico-cultural, as elsewhere, while showing how the national problem emerged from these processes.

British scholars have given anglophone Habsburg historiography more general surveys than one might expect, in view of their decreasing share in the historiography as a whole. The figures are too small overall for substantive comment, but this feature may partly reflect the interest in the nature of the Habsburg state with which British writing began. The need to provide a narrative entails the risk of teleology, in that the fall of the Monarchy may shadow accounts of its evolution, at least in treatment of the later modern period. Macartney's "history of the retreat" could be seen in these terms, and Seton-Watson and Taylor certainly traced patterns of political failure. Writers who wish to emphasise the positive criticize this tendency, but have been chary of developing their own syntheses.⁹⁵ Steven Beller in the latest British general history notes the tendency towards more favourable assessments of the Monarchy but does not endorse them. His critique reaches back to the Counter-Reformation. Austria never really recovered from the events of 1809–1811; the empire's modernization remained "problematic". These are sharp verdicts from a historian associated with discussion of Vienna 1900 and Austrian Jewry which tend towards more sympathetic treatments of the later Monarchy⁹⁶.

The historiography of the Monarchy stands at a critical point, when issues of development, ethnicity and multiculturalism confront a perplexed world. It challenges a somewhat ingrown Habsburg specialism to view its rich subject matter from a fuller range of possible angles. New approaches, as in the emerging theme

⁹³ Taylor, *Europe*, p.131.

⁹⁴ Okey, *Habsburg Monarchy*, pp. 283–305, 397–400.

⁹⁵ See, though, Pieter Judson, *The Habsburg Empire: A New History*. (Cambridge, MA; London, England 2016). This is boldly innovative and strong on Austro-German themes, but thinner treatment elsewhere make it less convincing as an assessment of the Monarchy as a whole.

⁹⁶ Beller, *Concise History*, 64, 114, 129, 142. Beller's very negative view of Franz Joseph appeared in his previous biography, *Francis Joseph*.

of empire, may offer fresh perspectives, where British historians have something to say, if indirectly. Discussion has developed for the same reason as recent revalorization of the Monarchy, though differently expressed. If “[E]mpires were transitional structures that were created to mobilize the resources of the world”, as Anthony Hopkins has said⁹⁷, then 1918 represented a point at which European continental empires were felt to have played out their role. It is the problems of the nation state system that filled the vacuum which have revived interest in the imperial predecessors. The empire-orientated approach concentrates on three aspects: the comparative resources at empires’ disposal to carry out their role externally vis-a-vis other powers, and internally as regards demography, economy and finance; their structural organization (centre/periphery, direct/indirect rule, symmetry/asymmetry etc.); and the means used to maintain control in multicultural peripheries and to integrate these with the centre (army, communications, bureaucracy, religion, imperial figurehead and associated symbols).

To be sure, much of this is merely a reframing of familiar themes, but the comparative aspect can be illuminating. It is surely interesting to note that multiethnic states can emphasize cultural decentralization over political, like the Soviet Union, or the other way round, like modern Spain, where political freedoms are balanced by the constitutional obligation for citizens to know Spanish. The implications of the Austrian *Staatsgrundgesetz über die allgemeinen Rechte der Staatsbürger* from December 1867 prohibiting the compulsory learning of a second language are relevant here. The categories of political scientists sit uneasily with Hungary’s position in the Monarchy at different times but some of the terms above can help situate discussion. Even over-abstract formulas like that which makes a democratising egalitarianism the distinguishing mark between empires and multinational states can provide food for thought in the objections they provoke. How, after all, is equality to be defined? Maria Theresa already spoke of a “God-pleasing equality” in the context of peasant protection measures. Metternich also stressed that the Habsburg Monarchy recognised the absolute equality of men before the law. Czech socialists’ split from the multinational Austrian Social Democratic Party before 1914 was spurred by the claim that national equality involved economic as well as language justice. Likewise, assuming democracy and empire are necessarily incompatible is to take a very formalist view of democracy. The nature of imperial power indeed entails deference to a pattern of symbols and traditions that go beyond the common coin of modern democratic legitimation. But that a sovereign’s aura might be used to strengthen a modern polity is what the Austrian Social Democrat Karl Renner foresaw when, with Franz Joseph favouring universal suffrage in Austria and appearing to do so against the Hungarian elite, he invoked “an empire of the peoples” (*Völkerkaiserium*), “an imperial idea of the common people [der Kleinen], in both a national and a social sense”⁹⁸. Analysing the terms in which debate about empires versus democratic modernity has been conventio-

⁹⁷ Hopkins, *Back to the Future*, p. 205.

⁹⁸ Springer, *Grundlagen*, pp. 236-237.

nally framed relativizes the case for an Austrian multinational model; what is at stake, namely, is not a clash of ideological opposites but a pragmatic weighing of pro's and con's. The implication is that the case for the later Monarchy as pointing the way to , democracy might be as plausibly put by stressing the conservatism of modern practice as the extent to which the Monarchy approached modern ideals.

Britain's own imperial legacy helps explain the prominence of British historians in discussion of empires, but also their relative neglect of the largely land-locked Monarchy. Paul Kennedy's innovative discussion of great powers concentrated on the Spanish Habsburgs, with conventional British treatment of Metternich and the national problem, but a modern emphasis shows in his prioritization of resources as the Monarchy's chief weakness⁹⁹. Christopher Bayly and John Darwin refer to the Monarchy only incidentally, but the former's thesis on the first global age of imperialism – a period of growing international competitiveness from the mid-eighteenth century, requiring states to step up mobilisation of military and fiscal resources if they were to survive – fits the Monarchy eminently well, and his comments on proto-patriotism and the rise of “elite nationality” in the eighteenth century explicitly put eighteenth-century Austria in wider context¹⁰⁰. Similarly, Darwin's general case for the “default” position of imperial power in world history makes Franz Joseph's dynasticism appear less merely willful than it did to his critics in the first blush of a world “safe for democracy”¹⁰¹. An offshoot of British imperialism, radical Indian historians' work on “subaltern studies”, takes up a theme which might seem interesting in a Habsburg context, for they seek to critique both ruling and nationalist elites. Indeed, “subaltern” seems a subtler term to suggest the often neglected psychological aspect of ethnic relations in the Monarchy than James Joll's ‘subject peoples’.

It is not surprising, given the Monarchy's uniqueness, that comparisons with other milieux are rare in Habsburg studies¹⁰². But breadth of perspective remains most important with regard to the Monarchy itself. To write of it requires an even-handed grasp of the three major theatres in German-speaking Austria, Hungary and the Bohemian lands. Here again Robert Evans's role must be stressed. His study of the development of collaborating elites in these regions is a masterly account of a crucial process in the success of empire. In suggestive articles, lectures and book chapters he has extended his analysis of the Habsburg scene from the early modern period to 1867, probing the interrelations of these three centres, and a further relationship, that of the Monarchy with the wider central European world. With the passage to the later period the elite structures which underpinned the court-orientated society began to weaken both in Bohemia and Hungary; secularization lent an ethnic twist to existing religious communities; the pull of a western higher culture stimulated a push for self-affirmation of local elites defined by mother tongue. None of this is presented in terms of a teleology of decline, however. Thus, for Hungary “the revolutionary

⁹⁹ Kennedy, *Rise and Fall*, pp. 208–214.

¹⁰⁰ Bayly, *First Age*; Idem, *Birth of Modern World*, pp. 67–68.

¹⁰¹ Darwin, *After Tamerlane*, pp. 491, 497–499.

¹⁰² For a minor example, see Robert Evans' comparison of nineteenth century Wales and Slovakia in his *Austria, Hungary*, pp 159–160.

outcome was still extremely remote in November 1847”); the belief in mother tongue as crucial for individual maturity was “an implausible view, on previous evidence”¹⁰³. Evans blames the failures of neo-absolutism and of the foreign policies of the 1860s, not on inherent illogic of the attempted reforms or the impossibility of a settlement of the German problem, but on over-extension: juggling with too many, sometimes contradictory balls. One may suspect that the over-extension hides cumulative stress here, but the wish to keep possibilities open is admirable¹⁰⁴.

Evans sets the Habsburg Monarchy in the context of central Europe. Its ultimate role was to maintain a centuries old ‘weak hegemony’ in that space¹⁰⁵. This perspective fits in well with empire and global historians’ functional view of empire as facilitating the organisation of territory and resources in a given situation. The distinctive feature of the Habsburg Monarchy as an empire was that the relationship between core and periphery was blurred, for the three main units, Austrian-German, Bohemian and Hungarian, were roughly equivalent in power. This explains both the relative weakness of the centre and also its longevity, because of the absence of obvious geopolitical alternatives. In the terms of late medieval marriage politics, any one of them could, indeed briefly did, become focal point for the others. That the enduring union occurred under a German-speaking dynasty was not quite chance because of the wider role of the German language (and the link with the Holy Roman Empire) in the region, though in reaction to nationalist historiography Robert Evans rightly plays down the advance of German in the early Monarchy. However, as the pace of change accelerated, the Austro-German cultural and economic lead over non-Germans was reduced. Peripheral centres re-emerged in their own right, economically and in the alternative visions to Vienna’s fin-de-siècle which cultural historians are now highlighting in Budapest and Prague. This internal process was not of itself enough to overturn the empire, but related developments were also modifying the international situation. Tomáš Masaryk wrote later that already before 1914 he envisaged that “if social and democratic movements should gain strength in Europe”¹⁰⁶, Czechs might hope to win independence. Arguably, great power politics and the loss of the Monarchy’s perceived relevance to the international balance in Germany, Italy and finally the Near East played a more significant role than Masaryk’s social movements. Yet the core association of imperial systems with hierarchy and social conservatism remains. Franz Joseph did not, after all, respond to Renner’s call, which entailed universal suffrage in Hungary also. It was the collapse of several empires in the First World War which made alternative methods of organization, ostensibly more directly orientated to national and social concerns through the “democratic nation state”, appear attractive, necessary and possible¹⁰⁷.

¹⁰³ Ibid., pp. 190, 111.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., pp. 266–292.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 266.

¹⁰⁶ Masaryk, *Making of a State*, p. 47.

¹⁰⁷ Arguments in this and previous paragraphs draw in part on an unpublished paper of the present writer: Robin Okey, ‘The Habsburg Monarchy as a Multinational Community: Pro’s and Con’s of an Empire’, Oxford, 6 April 2009.

This density of factors involved in assessing the Monarchy is nicely brought out by Dominic Lieven, the major British contributor to the undeveloped discussion of the Monarchy as empire. Like Evans, Lieven sees its domestic difficulties but withholds judgement. Austria's nationality problem by the twentieth century was indeed insoluble, but can be relativized in light of the complexities of the modern European Union. In the circumstances the progress made towards multinational democracy was "impressive". This was emphatically not true of Hungary, however. The Monarchy's chief weakness as a Great Power was relatively limited resources, which meant it could only be successful in alliance with others. Foreign policy errors were thus the main determinants of its fate, like wars fought alone and the prioritization of prestige in 1914, with disastrous general consequences which belied the fact that as an empire it was not different morally from Britain, only less powerful and not, like Britain, operating outside Europe¹⁰⁸.

It is fitting to conclude this survey with these wider perspectives. Lieven's unexpectedly moralizing conclusion recalls the fact that the roots of British historiography of the Monarchy did not lie in academia so much as the curiosity of members of another empire, whose self-image as a liberal constitutional great power inclined them to an interest in international politics, while arousing qualms at the aspect of the Monarchy which Sked has called the state as *Hausmacht*.¹⁰⁹ It follows that political concerns played a prominent role, whether in support of the Monarchy as a bulwark of stability, the Seton-Watson switch to a nation-state perspective, or diplomatic historians' interest in the European state system. Indeed, it is notable how many leading British historians wrote on Habsburg themes in the period of British imperial power up to 1945. National self-confidence made them less alert to any comparison between themselves and the seemingly more conflicted Monarchy. Thus little direct reflection of Habsburg scenarios is to be found in the historiography of Britain itself, with the exception of the issue of composite monarchy in the seventeenth-century civil war mentioned above. The politician Arthur Griffith held up Dualist Hungary as a potential model for Ireland but it took an Irishman rather than a British historian to make the parallel, as did another subaltern nationalist Karel Havlíček in the Monarchy¹¹⁰. The irony is that the British Empire was a far more bizarre creation than the Habsburg Monarchy and much shorter-lived. Since 1945 the expansion of academic history and decline of topical resonance, till recently, of the Monarchy's fall, have enabled more engagement with the far longer story of its early modern rise: a story where emphasis has been on the successful emergence of a polity and its adaptation through the eighteenth-century reforms, if not wholly unproblematic in each case. The current resonance of issues of cultural identity and multi-ethnic organization, which seems unlikely to decline, can only sustain interest in the totality of its experience. It is to be hoped that British historians will continue to have a contribution to make to these challenging themes in a spirit which looks

¹⁰⁸ Lieven, *Empire*, pp.158–198 (here pp. 190–198).

¹⁰⁹ Sked, 1st edn. p. 4.

¹¹⁰ A. Griffith, *Resurrection of Hungary*.

beyond 'revisionist' and 'declinist' labels. The recent formation of the Cambridge New Habsburg Studies Network to explore fresh approaches to the history and culture of Central and Eastern Europe in a multidisciplinary and comparative context is good earnest for the future.

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POVZETEK

Britanski zgodovinarji in Habsburška monarhija (1500 – 1918). Pregled zgodovinopisja od približno 1850

Robin Okey

Članek postavlja obravnavo britanskih raziskovalcev habsburške zgodovine v kontekst zgodovinopisne tradicije kot celote. Kronološki pristop pokaže kontinuiteto in nove elemente, ki so se pojavili v tem dolgem obdobju, kot tudi delo, ki so ga Britanci vložili v širitev angleških in ameriških interesov na tem področju.

Pred letom 1914 so britanske laissez-faire tradicije omejevale institucionalno akademsko proučevanje monarhije v primerjavi z zasebniki. Odnos do Avstrije je odražal britansko samopodobo liberalnega imperija. Nezaupljivost do monarhije je ublažilo nezaupanje Rusiji, ki je predstavljala grožnjo britanskim interesom. R. W. Seton-Watson, prvi pomembnejši zgodovinar, ki se je ukvarjal s habsburško monarhijo, se je oddaljil od tega stališča in podprl slovanske narode v boju proti Dunaju med prvo svetovno vojno. Pri tem so ga poleg liberalizma vodili tudi britanski geopolitični dejavniki. Seton-Watson in njegova Šola slovanskih študij (School of Slavonic Studies), ki jo je ustanovil skupaj z *The Slavonic and East European Review* (Slovanski in vzhodnoevropski časopis), sta ohranjala zanimanje za narodnosti, medtem ko so vidni zgodovinarji kot Llewellyn Woodward, Harold Temperley and Charles Webster pisali o Metternichu in vlogi Avstrije v državnem sistemu po letu 1815, o temi, ki je stalnica britanskega zanimanja.

Proti koncu tridesetih let 20. stoletja se uveljavita A. J. P. Taylor in C. A. Macartney, čigar dela dominirajo na področju habsburških študij v prvih desetletjih po vojni. Avtor primerja liberalnega slovanofila Seton-Watsona in bolj konservativnega madžarofila Macartneyja, po izvoru »gosposka učenjaka«, ter brezkompromisnega radikalnega Taylorja v luči razlik in še posebej podobnosti znotraj britanskega zgodovinopisja, ki obravnava Habsburško monarhijo.

V obdobju po letu 1945 so omenjeno zgodovinopisje zaznamovale velike spremembe. Opaziti je širitev visokošolskega sektorja in zožitev obzorij post-imperialne Britanije, saj so večje ameriške kohorte prevzele primat med študijami v angleškem jeziku. Vidnejšo vlogo so odigrali strokovnjaki, priseljenci s tega območja, in raziskovali zgodnji novi vek, ki je bil pred tem zanemarjen. Zgodovinarji s tega področja so bili bližje pomislekom splošnega evropskega akademskega sveta kot modernisti. Koncept sestavljene monarhije Helmuta Koenigsbergerja se je izkazal za redek primer tega, kako je evropska obravnava vplivala na otoško in usmerila nov fokus na večnarodne dimenzije »angleške državljanske vojne«. Nastala so dela, ki obravnavajo versko, socialno in pravno problematiko, ki je manj prisotna v kasnejših sodobnih Britanskih obravnava, kot tudi pomembni pregledi srednjeevropskih tem, ki zadevajo Habsburžane: tridesetletna vojna (Peter Wilson) in Sveto rimsko cesarstvo (Peter Wilson in Joachim Whaley). Robert Evans je najpomembnejši raziskovalec Habsburžanov. Njegovo pionirsko delo z naslovom *The Making of the Habsburg Monarchy, 1500-1700* (1979) izraža kritiko absolutistično naravnanih pogledov na monarhijo in prikazuje bolj enotno sliko dinastije, magnatov in protireformacije. Zavedajoč se njihovih ranljivosti je očrtal razsvetljenstvo in jožefinizem, obdobje, s katerim so povezana pomembna dela Petra Dicksona o vladavini Marije Terezije in Dereka Bealesa o Jožefu II. Tudi dela Tima Blanninga so pomemben prispevek k proučevanju Jožefa II. in razsvetljenstva.

Vprašanje o sposobnosti preživetja monarhije je vzbujalo pozornost kasnejšega sodobnega zgodovinopisja: F. Roy Bridge je vodilni britanski zgodovinar na področju habsburške zunanje politike, Zbyněk Zeman je v delu z naslovom *The Break-up of the Habsburg Empire* (1961) načel razpravo o razpadu monarhije, medtem ko Mark Cornwall obravnava propagando, povezano s prvo svetovno vojno. Poseganje po omenjenih temah je posledica vpliva kulturne zgodovine in trendov v ameriškem zgodovinopisju. Vpliv kulturne zgodovine se odraža v *Austrian Studies*, letopisu, ki sta ga leta 1990 ustanovila germanista Edward Timms in Ritchie Robertson. Zgodovinska dela o avstrijskih piscih, glasbi, umetnosti in feminizmu so pogosto nastala izpod peres nezgodovinarjev. Prav zgodovinarji so načeli vprašanje o prisotnosti Judov; eden izmed njih je Steven Beller, ki je to tematiko povezal z dunajskim fin-de-siecle. Članek se zaključuje s komentarji o novejši revizionistični šoli, ki je kritična do pogleda, ki pravi, da je bila monarhija obsojena na propad. Britanskih zgodovinarjev, ki obravnavajo Habsburžane, je premalo, da bi v tem pogledu prišli do konsenza. Ko je bilo revizionistično stališče šele v razvoju, se je avtor članka v svojem pregledu monarhije z naslovom *The Habsburg Monarchy c. 1765-1918* (2001) posvetil vprašanju narodnosti, ki predstavlja enega njegovih glavnih interesov. Perspektive, ki se odpirajo, so fascinantne, a prinašajo vprašanja v nekaterih zadevah, predvsem glede splošnega značaja očitkov, avstrocentričnega pogleda na monarhijo in zanemarjanja širše literarne produkcije o cesarstvu. Na tem mestu je britanski prispevek potencialno relevanten, četudi zgolj posreden. Zgodovinarji, kot so Christopher Bayley, Anthony Hopkins, Paul Kennedy in John Darwin, so predstavili cesarstva kot sredstva za organizacijo prostora, vključujoč odnose med centrom in periferijo ter vse potrebno za to nalogo. Na te ideje se za boljši vpogled v Habsburško monarhijo opirata Robert Evans, ki se posveča monarhiji v poznejšem obdobju, in Dominic Lieven. Upam, da bo zgodovinopisje, ki jo obravnava, videlo onstran oznak, kot so »revizionističen« in »obsojen na zaton«.

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